



SUBJECT: NASS Annual Awards for Excellence Program

EFFECTIVE: August 31, 2009

EXPIRES: July 1, 2010

FOR ACTION BY: Field Offices (FOs) and Headquarters Units

SEND RESPONSE TO: DAFO FO and Headquarters Awards Committees

DUE DATE: See Section VIII, Schedule and Due Dates

PROJECT CODES: 365 - Administrative Personnel Activities
318 - NASS Teams and Committee Work

ACCOUNTING CODE: 09006049 (Fiscal Year 2010)

REFERENCE: NASSNet under *Awards*

Approved by: _____
NASS Administrator

I. GENERAL:

This Operations Memorandum (OM) covers the annual NASS awards process and procedures for fiscal year (FY) 2009; it does **not** include information about NASS's *Annual Employee Performance Appraisal Program* which is covered in A-12-09.

An integral part of NASS's employee recognition plan is the Awards for Excellence Program which annually recognizes NASS employees, non-Federal staff, teams, and NASDA enumerators. NASS's Awards for Excellence are the highest Agency awards that can be given to an individual or a team. Individuals or groups are nominated for an award based on outstanding accomplishments or special innovation, creativity, and initiative that impacted the overall NASS organization. The Awards for Excellence Program differs from the annual employee performance bonus program. The NASS Awards for Excellence Program provides an opportunity to recognize and reward employees who have taken their innovative ideas and implemented them to the benefit and improvement of the entire Agency.

The Awards for Excellence nominations are submitted each year in August and September. These awards are presented at an annual ceremony to honor and celebrate the outstanding efforts and contributions of high performing individual employees and teams over the past FY.

II. OVERVIEW:

NASS's Awards for Excellence Program includes the:

A.) Administrator's Award for Excellence; B.) Circle Award for Team Excellence; C.) Cooperator of the Year Award for Excellence; and D.) NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award for Excellence. NASS no longer uses the Extra Effort awards in its employee or team recognition program. Similarly, gold awards were assimilated into the performance bonus system and thus are no longer given as an award.

Each year, the Administrator determines the total funds available for the Administrator's and Circle Awards, staying within budgetary constraints. This information is communicated to the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO) Field Office (FO) and HQ Awards Committees, as well as the Agency-wide Incentive Awards Committee (IAC). The Administrator's Award winners each receive about \$3,000. On average, individual team members included in a Circle Award each receive about \$1,000, although the amounts vary according to the individual team member's contribution to the Team's mission. For the Circle Award, the minimum that can be given to any individual team member is \$300; the maximum is \$1,500. An individual who is the recipient of multiple awards may not receive a total of more than \$4,500. NASDA employees who are recipients of the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award each receive \$1,000. Cooperator of the Year Award recipients receive a keepsake award.

A. Administrator's Award for Excellence:

The highest levels of individual employee achievements are annually recognized with the NASS Administrator's Award for Excellence. This prestigious award is given for outstanding efforts that significantly advance any of the seven Award Attribute areas as described in Section III, under Item B. Individuals recognized with this award have demonstrated their creativity and innovation through work that has Agency-wide impact. Recipients of this award are selected by the Administrator from the pool of nominees forwarded by the IAC. Administrator's Award recipients each receive approximately \$3,000.

Individuals submitted for the Administrator's Award for Excellence must be nominated under **one** of the following three Awards Categories. This is the only Awards for Excellence requiring the designation of an Awards Category for each nominee. Placing each individual into the appropriate Awards Category allows them to fairly compete among their peers for the Administrator's Award.

1.) **Program Support (Single Interval):**

This Awards Category is solely designated for single interval, support employees. Secretaries, statistical assistants, administrative technicians, office automation assistants, administrative support positions, computer assistants, mail and file clerks, etc., are examples of positions included in this Awards Category.

2.) **Supervisor/Manager:**

Only Section Heads, Branch Chiefs, Staff Directors, Deputy State Directors, State Directors, and others in supervisory positions are included in this Awards Category.

3.) **Non-Supervisory (Double Interval):**

This Awards Category is for all other NASS employees not included above.

The DAFO FO Awards Committee reviews all of the nominations from the FOs for the Administrator's Award, and submits their recommendations directly to the IAC. HQ-initiated Administrator's Award nominations are submitted to the IAC from the individual HQ Awards Committees.

B. Circle Award for Team Excellence:

The highest level of team achievement is annually recognized with a NASS Circle Award for Team Excellence. NASS groups or teams that achieved their goals, objectives, and assignments during the past FY should be considered for special recognition. An individual can be a member of more than one team receiving recognition, and an employee may also be the recipient of the Administrator's Award. However, the work being recognized and rewarded must be unique to each award.

Circle Award nominations from both the FOs and Headquarters are reviewed and ranked by the appropriate Awards Committees before they are forwarded to the IAC for review and ranking. The appropriate Awards Committee is the one who has jurisdiction over the nominating supervisor or other nominating official. After review by the DAFO FO Awards Committee or one of the HQ Division Awards Committees, the Circle Award then moves to the IAC for consideration, and finally to the Administrator who makes the final determination of the Circle Award winners. At any time prior to the final review by the Administrator, adjustments can be made to the Circle Award team membership and the recommended individual award amounts.

In August, prior to consideration by any Awards Committees, The NASS Business Council does a preliminary review of HQ-initiated Circle Award nominations in order to preview the types of teams being nominated and the recommended HQ and FO team membership. The Business Council then provides feedback to the nominating HQ units regarding the team membership, the awards writeups, award amounts, etc.

The budget available for team awards is annually determined by the Administrator, and the total awards allocation for Circle Awards cannot be exceeded. On average, individual employees included in a Circle Award receive about \$1,000 each; the minimum that can be given to any individual team member is \$300; the maximum is \$1,500. An individual can be on multiple teams, but cannot receive more than \$4,500 in total awards payout.

C. Cooperator of the Year Award for Excellence:

Extraordinary accomplishments by NASS non-federal coworkers, partners (including Federal employees), and other cooperators (State Department of Agriculture and university personnel, for example) are eligible to be recognized with the Cooperator of the Year Award for Excellence. Outstanding Cooperators are recognized in the Awards for Excellence ceremony in Washington, D.C., and receive a Keepsake award to commemorate their outstanding contributions and enhancements to NASS's programs and products, customers and stakeholders, employees, and the overall cooperative relationship. The Cooperator of the Year recommendations from the FOs are considered by the DAFO FO Awards Committee then go directly to the Administrator for final review and approval and do not go through the IAC.

D. NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award for Excellence

The grassroots data collection and public relations work performed by NASDA enumerators is key to NASS's ability to perform its mission of serving the Nation's agriculture through the dissemination of timely, accurate, and useful information. Each year, NASS honors a total of twelve NASDA employees, eight enumerators (four Field Enumerators and four Office Enumerators/Coaches) and four supervisory enumerators (two from the Field and two from the Office). Recognition is given for outstanding efforts in enumerator training and mentoring; data collection; dependability; efficiency;

respondent relations; and, for supervisory enumerators only, a category for supervision. Each NASDA award recipient is recognized at the Agency's annual Awards for Excellence ceremony and they also receive a \$1,000 monetary award for their outstanding efforts.

The DAFO FO Awards Committee receives recommendations from the NASDA Supervisory Enumerator Advisory Committee (SEAC), who do a review and ranking of all of the FO submissions. The DAFO FO Awards Committee then reviews and approves the final twelve awardees for the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award and submits their recommendations directly to the Administrator without going through the IAC.

III. THE AWARDS JUSTIFICATION:

A. General:

Anyone can nominate an individual for an Award for Excellence by providing a written awards justification and by working with the nominee's supervisor to prepare and submit the needed documents to the appropriate Awards Committee. Font size for the awards justification should be no smaller than 10 pitch and the length of the justification cannot exceed 2 pages. The Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template must be used to submit the individual or team nomination (see Attachment 2).

The awards writeup should document the exceptional contributions and the breadth of impact on NASS by the employee or the team. Each awards justification must be based upon work that resulted in specific accomplishments, contributions, or outcomes that contributed significantly to **one or more of the Award Attributes** from the list of seven areas described in Item B below. Specifically, the justification must address the actions and the specific results, benefits, or outcomes of those actions, and **how creativity and innovation fostered those successes**. The document must clearly answer the "so what?" question and show, **using specific examples**, how the work exceeded the normal job duties and yielded results which reaped benefits way beyond the single Field Office or HQ work unit. The accomplishments should illustrate exactly what was done, said, heard, and seen that resulted in significant benefits and outcomes to the Agency. FO awards justifications must clearly demonstrate how the work accomplished by the individual or the team made an impact beyond that particular FO. The key to enlarging the scope of the impact is **sharing** the idea/approach/development to a wider audience for adoption rather than being content to adopt the "better mousetrap" in only one State. The continued improvement in communications tools and technology, such as the development of the NASSWiki, enhance the opportunities for employees to share their creative and innovative ideas.

Circle Award justifications should include information about how the team demonstrated superior teamwork skills. The Circle Awards justifications must also include at least one line per team member at the end of the document describing each team member's particular role on the team and how they contributed to the team's overall success.

B. The seven NASS Award Attribute areas:

The awards justification should describe how the individual or team **used creativity and innovation** to advance one or more of the following seven Award Attributes:

- 1.) Advancement of USDA and/or NASS mission and goals;
- 2.) Improved quality of NASS Products and Services;
- 3.) Increased Efficiency/Effectiveness/Productivity/Cost Savings;

- 4.) Outstanding Customer Service;
- 5.) Public Relations/Promotion of NASS's image and recognition;
- 6.) Demonstration of NASS Core Values: Trust, Respect, Unbiasedness, Service, and Teamwork;
- 7.) Completion of special assignments under extraordinary or very unusual circumstances;

C.) Cooperator of the Year Award for Excellence:

This award recognizes NASS non-federal coworkers, partners, and other cooperators, such as Federal partners, State Department of Agriculture, and university personnel, for their outstanding work in support of NASS's mission. The Cooperator of the Year writeup must show, **using specific examples**, how the individual's work contributed to NASS's programs and products, customers and stakeholders, employees, and the cooperative relationship. The Cooperator of the Year recipients receive a keepsake award and participate in the annual NASS Awards Ceremony.

D.) NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award for Excellence:

FOs coordinate the submission of nominations of NASDA employees for this award in August of each year. Each Field Office can nominate up to four Enumerators or Supervisory Enumerators, using six criteria which correlate with the NASDA Job Performance Elements. The Field Offices' nominations are submitted to SEAC, who review them and then submit their top ten candidates in each of the four categories (Field Enumerator, Field Supervisor, Office Enumerator, and Office Supervisor) to the DAFO FO Awards Committee. This Committee then makes the selection of the final twelve individuals for recommendation to the NASS Administrator. Detailed instructions regarding this award are distributed to FOs each year under separate cover and are not included in this instruction.

IV. THE NASS AWARDS COMMITTEES:

There are four types of Awards Committees in NASS, which are described below. In addition to these four, SEAC functions as an ad hoc NASDA awards committee for about 1 month each year when the initial review and ranking of the annual NASDA Awards for Excellence nominations are submitted to them from all of the FOs.

A. **Individual Field Office Awards Committees:**

Having an Awards Committee in a given FO is optional and is at the discretion of the office staff and the managers. The purpose of the Field Office's Awards Committees is to involve more FO staff in the awards process and to give more local control over the budget and distribution of spot awards. In addition to reviewing the office's Awards for Excellence nominations, the Committee may also review the FOs' Spot Awards. These Committees may meet periodically during the year, not just during the Awards for Excellence process. About half of the NASS FOs have chosen to have one, which is comprised of at least three office staff members who are representative of the office's employees; the State Director and Deputy Director may not serve on these Committees. Members serve more than one year so that there are both new and returning members each year. The Chair is elected by the Committee. Normally these Committees meet to review the Awards for Excellence for the office, make suggestions to strengthen the writeups, and then submit their recommendations to the State Director.

The State-level FO Awards Committee Chair does **not** sign either the AD-287-2 or the Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template before submission to the State Director. Either the State Director or the Deputy Director must sign and date the AD-287-2, Recommendation & Approval of Awards, in the *Recommending Individual* block. FOs send in their nominations to HQ for the Administrator's Award, Circle Award, Cooperator of the Year Award, and, in August each year using a separate process, the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award.

B. DAFO FO Awards Committee:

The DAFO FO Awards Committee is an Agency-level Committee comprised of five FO representatives from across the U.S. who meet in September of each year in Headquarters. No more than one supervisor serves as a member in any given year and may not be the Chairperson. The Chair of the DAFO FO Awards Committee also serves as the FO representative on the Agency-level IAC, along with one other DAFO FO Awards Committee member.

The DAFO FO Awards Committee reviews all of the nominations from the FOs for the Administrator's Award, Circle Awards, the Cooperator of the Year Award, and the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award. The DAFO FO Awards Committee passes on to the IAC their rankings and recommendations from the Field Offices' Administrator's Award and Circle Award nominations, but their Cooperator of the Year recommendations go directly to the Administrator for final review and approval and do not go through the IAC.

Similarly, the Committee reviews and approves the final 12 awardees for the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award and then submits their recommendations directly to the NASS Administrator. These 12 are selected from the list of final NASDA nominations forwarded to the DAFO FO Awards Committee from SEAC. Each August, SEAC reviews all of the submissions from the FOs, ranks them, and then forwards on to the DAFO FO Awards Committee their top 10 nominees in each of the four categories: Field Enumerators, Field Supervisors, Office Enumerators, and Office Supervisors.

C. HQ Division Awards Committees:

Each HQ Division has an Awards Committee responsible for the review of Division awards submissions. These Committees review and rank the Administrator's and Circle Awards nominations and submit them to the IAC for consideration. For Circle Awards, the appropriate reviewing HQ Division Awards Committee is the one who has jurisdiction over the nominating supervisor, or other nominating official.

These HQ Division Awards Committees are 4-8 members in size, and do not have any supervisors on them. Membership should be representative of their organizational unit's job series, grades, and other diversity factors. The Committee Chair is elected by the group. Members normally serve for more than one year and rotate regularly so that there are both new and returning members each year. The Chairperson of each HQ Division Awards Committee serves on the IAC. The Division Awards Committee Chairs must sign-off on the Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approval Template before an individual or team nomination can be forwarded on to the IAC. All nominations are reviewed, ranked, and then sent forward to the IAC for their consideration.

D. NASS Incentive Awards Committee (IAC):

The IAC is established by the Administrator to provide an employee and peer review of the Agency's award nominees, provide input into the Agency's awards process and policies, and serve as a general Agency-level awards advisory panel. The Committee meets annually in September in Headquarters. The IAC is comprised of the Chairpersons of each of the HQ Division Awards Committees, along with the DAFO FO Awards Committee Chair and one other DAFO FO Awards Committee member. IAC members concurrently serve as members of their Division or work unit Awards Committees. Supervisors generally do not serve on the IAC. The IAC selects its Chairperson from its membership. A representative from NASS's Human Resources Services Office (HRSO) attends the IAC meetings, as needed, to advise but does not vote as a member. The previous year's IAC Chairperson serves in an advisory capacity. Appointments for a minimum of two-year terms are recommended to maintain experience and consistency on the Committee.

The IAC considers the Circle and Administrator's Awards for Excellence nominations received from the HQ Division Awards Committees and from the DAFO FO Awards Committee. The IAC does not review the Cooperator of the Year or the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award nominations, as these are handled by the DAFO FO Awards Committee who submits their recommendations directly to the Administrator for final consideration. The IAC recommendations for the Administrator's Award and the Circle Award are ultimately forwarded to the Administrator for final approval.

The IAC Chair receives and distributes the justifications and supporting awards documentation to the Committee members for review. The IAC works with the *Recommending Individuals* (as shown on the AD-287-2, Recommendation and Approval of Awards Form) to fully understand each awards submission, communicate concerns with the recommendation, and reach consensus on changes. Committee members may also contact the nominating individual, or others, for information that may assist in the review process. Committee actions can take any of the following forms: recommend the award as submitted; not recommend the award; modify the award by changing the award amounts and/or adding or deleting names to Circle awards. One important purpose of the Committee is to review and assess award amounts to provide consistency in awards across HQ Divisions and the FOs. The IAC may seek clarification from supervisors, the team's Executive Sponsor, nominees' peers, etc. in order to better evaluate the nomination. The Chairs of affected Divisions or the DAFO FO Awards Committee Chair must sign for concurrence when a change is made.

V. THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTS & KEEPSAKES:

When the Committees have completed their work and the Administrator has reviewed and approved the awards, the paperwork must be submitted to HRSO for submission to the Administrative and Financial Management-Human Resources Division (AFM-HRD) no later than October 9, 2009 (see Section VIII., Schedule and Due Dates). The following week, HRSO and AFM-HRD meet to process paperwork and resolve any problematic submissions, with all packages complete and ready no later than October 20, 2009. Any awards paperwork received after that date will not get processed in time for employees to receive their awards payout in Pay Period 24 (December 14, 2009). Preparations for the annual NASS Awards for Excellence Ceremony, scheduled for December 11, begins immediately after final approval of the awards is received from the Administrator.

A. AD-287-2: Recommendation and Approval of Awards Form.

All award nominations require a completed AD-287-2; these are normally initiated by the first-line supervisor, or the individual making the individual or team awards nomination. The form is usually signed by the first-level supervisor as the *Recommending Individual*, and then later signed by the appropriate Branch Chief, Division Director, or Deputy Administrator for Field Operations as the *Reviewing Official*, and, finally, the Administrator as the *Approving Official*.

The proper accounting information must be entered on the AD-287-2. For FY 2009, the following **accounting number** should be used for FY 2010 payout: **09006049**.

The citation for the award shown in Block 11 of the AD-287-2 should capture the essence of the employee's or team's achievements and must be limited to 25 words or less since it must fit onto a plaque.

- For the **Administrator's Award for Excellence**, check "Extra Effort" and type "Administrator" in the space below "Extra Effort" under Item 12. The Awards for Excellence Nominations & Approvals Template, with the accompanying writeup for the employee, will be attached to the AD-287-2.
- For the **Circle Awards**, check "Extra Effort" and type "Circle" in the space below "Extra Effort." The Awards for Excellence Nominations & Approvals Template, with the accompanying team writeup, is attached to the AD-287-2. Also attached is the Circle Award Team Member Summary Sheet which has information listed for each team member and shows the dollar amount designated for each. Nominating officials should recommend a specific dollar allocation for each team member, based on their individual contributions and value to the team. On average, individual employees included in a Circle Award receive about \$1,000 each; the minimum that can be given to any individual team member is \$300; the maximum is \$1,500. An individual can be on multiple teams, but cannot receive more than \$4,500 in total awards payout. Note that forms with the individual amounts left blank will be held up until the nominating official can be contacted to gather the required information. The Administrator may make adjustments to the final award amounts in order to stay within Agency budgetary constraints.
- For the **Cooperator of the Year Awards**, nominating officials should check "Keepsake" and type in "Cooperator" in the space below "Keepsake," under Item 12.
- For the **NASDA Enumerator of the Year Awards**, nominating officials should check "Other" and type in "NASDA" in the space below "Other," under item 12.

B. Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template.

Normally, the first-line supervisor or other nominating official completes this template, prepares the awards writeup for the individual or team, and makes sure that it is submitted with the AD-287-2 form to the appropriate Awards Committee. They do **not** sign the Awards for Excellence Nominations & Approvals Template. The three signature and date blocks shown on the first page of the Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template are reserved for the HQ or FO Awards Committee Chairpersons (*I. Division/FO Awards Committee Recommendation*); the IAC Chairperson (*II. Incentive Awards*

Committee (IAC) Recommendation); and the Administrator (*III. NASS Administrator's Approval*).

C. Circle Award Team Member Summary Sheet (for Circle Awards only).

The purpose of this form is to provide information on each of the individual Circle Team members for proper processing of their individual awards. This form is completed by the first-line supervisor, or the nominating official. All information in the table must be completed for each of the team members: employee's name; SSN; position title; series/grade/step; location; and the dollar award amount designated for each member. The Accounting Code information has already been entered on the form. It is very important that the individual dollar award designations are noted on the form; failure to do so will possibly delay the processing of the award.

D. Plaques and Keepsakes for the Awardees.

Plaques for the Administrator's Award winners, the Circle Awards for Excellence awardees, and the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award recipients will be coordinated with each Division and the Office of the Administrator by HRSO. HRSO will also order the keepsake awards for the Cooperator of the Year recipients.

VI: THE APPROVAL PROCESS:

Step 1.

Normally, the first line supervisor or other nominating official initiates the AD-287-2, Recommendation & Approval of Awards form, and the Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template, which includes the awards writeup, for each of their individual or team awards nominations. The only signature that the supervisor or other nominating official is required to do is on the AD-287-2 in the first signature block on the bottom, *Recommending Individual*. No other entries are necessary on the AD-287-2, and the supervisors should **not** sign anywhere on the Awards for Excellence Nominations & Approvals Form.

Step 2.

A.) The HQ-initiated Circle Awards and Administrator's Awards go to the appropriate HQ Awards Committees for review and ranking. The HQ Awards Committee Chairpersons are responsible for signing the first signature block (*I. Division/FO Awards Committee Recommendation*) on the Awards for Excellence Nominations & Approvals Template. The Committee Chairpersons do **not** sign the AD-287-2, Recommendation & Approval of Awards Form; the appropriate Branch Chief or Division Director should sign the AD-287-2 in the second signature block as the *Reviewing Official*.

B.) For the awards originating from the Field Offices, the Administrator's Awards, Circle Awards, Cooperator of the Year Awards, and the NASDA Awards, the FO Awards Committee Chairperson is responsible for signing the first signature block (*I. Division/FO Awards Committee Recommendation*) on the Awards for Excellence Nominations & Approvals Template. The DAFO FO Awards Committee Chairperson does **not** sign the AD-287-2 Form. The AD-287-2 Form is signed by the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations as the *Reviewing Official*.

Step 3.

After the work of the HQ Awards Committees and the DAFO FO Awards Committee is complete, the reviewed and ranked Administrator's Awards and the Circle Awards are given to the IAC for review, ranking, and recommendation to the Administrator. Prior to forwarding, the IAC Chairperson is responsible for signing the second signature block (*II. Incentive Awards Committee (IAC) Recommendation*) on the Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template. The IAC Chair does **not** sign the AD-287-2.

The Cooperator of the Year and the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Awards go directly to the Administrator from the DAFO FO Awards Committee; they do **not** go through the IAC review process. Therefore, the second signature block (*II. Incentive Awards Committee (IAC) Recommendation*) on the Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template is left blank in this case. The Deputy Administrator for Field Operations signs the AD-287-2 as the *Reviewing Official* before the Cooperator and the NASDA nominations are forwarded to the Administrator.

Step 4.

The Administrator does the final review and approval of the awards recommended by the DAFO FO Awards Committee (Cooperator of the Year and the NASDA Enumerator of the Year), and from the IAC (Administrator's and Circle). The Administrator completes the last signature and date block on the AD-287-2 form as the *Approving Official*. Finally, the Administrator also completes the third, and last, signature and date block (*III. NASS Administrator's Approval*) on the Awards for Excellence Nominations & Approvals Template. The Administrator may approve or not approve the awards recommendations submitted by the two Awards Committees. The Administrator may also make adjustments to the Circle Award team membership and the recommended dollar award allocations for individual Circle team members. The approved awards are forwarded to HRSO, and preparations begin for the annual NASS Awards for Excellence Ceremony in December.

VII. THE FINAL PACKAGE:

As stated above, after the final review and approvals have been received from the NASS Administrator, the employee and team awards documents are provided to HRSO for forwarding to AFM-HRD for processing no later than Friday, October 9, 2009 (see Section VIII. Schedule and Due Dates). The forms are stapled together for each individual or team award nomination to make one package for processing. Awards packages received by AFM-HRD after October 20, 2009, will not be processed in time for the awardees to receive their awards payout in Pay Period 24.

Each NASS awards package must include the following completed forms:

1. AD-287-2: Recommendation and Approval of Awards Form (Attachment 1).

The form must have the appropriate signatures and date boxes completed in the three areas designated for: *Approving Individual* (usually the first-level supervisor or nominating official), *Reviewing Official* (the appropriate Branch Chief, Division Director, or the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations); and *Approving Official* (always the NASS Administrator).

2. Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template (Attachment 2).

Page one of this template must be completed for each nomination, and the individual or team awards justification must be attached using the writeup guidance shown on page 2 of the form. The awards justification can be no more than 2-pages in length. Each of the three signature and date blocks shown on page 1 must be completed for the Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template to be valid. The only exception to this is for the Cooperator of the Year and the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award, when the second signature block may be left blank, since those awards do not go through the IAC for review.

3. Circle Award Team Member Summary Sheet, for Circle Awards only (Attachment 3).

This purpose of this form is to provide information on each of the individual Circle Team members for proper processing of their individual awards. Except for the Accounting Code information which has been pre-entered, each column in the table must be completed, including the dollar award amount designated for each team member. Failure to complete the individual dollar award allocations may delay processing of the Circle Award. The DAFO FO Awards Committee, the HQ Awards Committees, and the Administrator may make adjustments to the teams' membership and to the recommended dollar award allocations for each individual team member.

VIII: SCHEDULE and DUE DATES:

- **August 2009:** Field Office and HQ Division Awards Committee members and Chairpersons named and IAC Chair appointed.
- **August 19:** HQ-initiated Circle Team Award nominations solicited and submitted to the appropriate HQ Awards Committee.
- **August 19:** HQ-initiated Circle Award nominations are reviewed at a meeting of the NASS Business Council.
- **August 20-28:** BC coordinates a review of the HQ Circle Award nominations with the HQ Division Directors and HQ-DAFO for purposes of membership, awards justification quality, and appropriateness of recommended dollar award amounts.
- **September 11:** All Awards submissions—Administrator's, Circle, Cooperator of the Year-- must be in to the appropriate FO-level or HQ Awards Committee.
- **September 14-23:** Individual FO-level and HQ Awards Committees meet to review, rate, and rank nominations.
- **September 24:** For the FO-initiated awards nominations, all of the awards paperwork, including the awards writeups, are due to DAFO in hardcopy, or electronically to the HQ DAFO HRS Official Mailbox no later than this date. These include the nominations for the Administrator's Awards, Circle Awards, and the Cooperator of the Year Awards. The NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award nominations were submitted earlier using a separate process.

For HQ submissions, the HQ Awards Committee Chairpersons are responsible for making sure the Administrator's and Circle Awards nominations are submitted to the IAC Chairperson no later than this date.

- **September 28-October 2:** The DAFO FO Awards Committee and the IAC meet this week.

The DAFO FO Awards Committee meets in HQ to review the FOs' Administrator's Award, Circle, and Cooperator of the Year Award nominations. The DAFO FO Committee will also review the SEAC recommendations for the NASDA Enumerator of the Year Award. Later that same week, the IAC convenes in HQ to review all of the Agency's Administrator's and Circle Award nominations.

- **October 5-8:** The DAFO FO Awards Committee and the IAC Committees' recommendations for the Administrator's, Circle, Cooperator of the Year, and NASDA Awards are reviewed and receive final approval by the NASS Administrator.
- **October 9:** All approved awards and corresponding paperwork must be provided to NASS HRSO for review and forwarding on to AFM-HRD.
- **October 13-16:** NASS HRSO and AFM-HRD work together on-site at the Portals Building to review NASS award packages for compliance to the awards process and to resolve problematic awards packages.
- **October 20:** Latest date for any lingering paperwork to be submitted to AFM-HRD.
- **October 26-November 27:** Order Awards plaques, prepare Awards for Excellence Program, make travel arrangements for FO awardees, etc.
- **November 8 (Pay Period #23):** The effective date for all awards paperwork received by AFM-HRD by no later than October 20, 2009.
- **December 3:** Awards money included in employee paychecks.
- **December 2009:** The FOs and Headquarters units hold their own awards events. Note that the FO and Headquarters Divisions' awards ceremonies **should not be** scheduled until they have been notified by HRSO that the plaques and certificates are ready.
- **December 11:** The **2009 NASS Awards for Excellence** ceremony will be held in HQ. Normally this event is coordinated with the annual NASS Club Holiday Celebration.

IX. QUESTIONS:

Questions regarding the NASS awards program, processing the awards, and due dates should be directed to Jay Johnson, (202) 720-5141, or Hareg Mismaku, Human Resources Coordinator, at (202) 720-4972.

ATTACHMENTS:

Recommendation and Approval of Awards form AD-287-2 (Attachment 1)
 Awards for Excellence Nominations and Approvals Template (Attachment 2)
 Circle Award Team Members Summary Sheet (Attachment 3)

It is the policy of the Department to ensure that consideration for awards is made without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, disability or other nonmerit factors.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RECOMMENDATION & APPROVAL OF AWARDS				CASE NO. (Personnel Use Only)	
NOTE: For group awards, attach list of group members. Show data in Items 2-9, and award amount for each payee.					
1. AGENCY		2. NAME OF EMPLOYEE (Last, first, middle initial)			
3. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.		4. POSITION TITLE		5. PAY PLAN-SERIES / GRADE / STEP	
6. ORGANIZATION AND LOCATION		7. PERIOD COVERED FOR AWARD (mm, dd, yy)		8. ACCOUNTING CODE	
		From: To:			
9. IF AWARD APPROVED, MAIL CHECK TO:		(ADDRESS)			
<input type="checkbox"/> SALARY CHECK ADDRESS <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify address):					
10. LIST AWARDS OR QSIS IN THE PAST 52 WEEKS (Specify type of award, amount received, and effective date.)					
11. CITATION: SUMMARIZE EMPLOYEE'S CONTRIBUTION IN 25 WORDS OR LESS. (This language will appear on the employee's certificate.)					
EMPLOYEE IS BEING RECOGNIZED FOR:					
COMPLETE THE APPROPRIATE AWARD SECTION					
12. TYPE OF RECOGNITION RECOMMENDED (check one)					
<input type="checkbox"/> EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION OR INVENTION* <input type="checkbox"/> EXTRA EFFORT AWARD* <input type="checkbox"/> SPOT AWARD <input type="checkbox"/> TIME OFF AWARD** <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER*					
<input type="checkbox"/> KEEPSAKE AWARD <input type="checkbox"/> GAINSHARING AWARD					
* Attach a description of the contribution or patent notification being recognized and the resulting benefits to the Government. ** Attach a description if the contribution exceeds the moderate benefits.					
13. NO. OF PERSONS	14. TOTAL AWARD (Give dollar amount / hours, or value of item)	15. TOTAL DOLLAR AMOUNT / HOURS BASED ON: (Check approp. box)	ESTIMATED FIRST YEAR SAVINGS		
		<input type="checkbox"/> MEASURABLE BENEFITS SCALE <input type="checkbox"/> NONMEASURABLE BENEFITS SCALE	\$ VALUE OF BENEFITS APPLICATION		
16. TYPE OF RECOGNITION RECOMMENDED (check one)					
<input type="checkbox"/> PERFORMANCE BONUS AWARD* <input type="checkbox"/> QUALITY STEP INCREASE*					
Certification: I certify, by my signature in the Recommendation & Approval section below, that the employee's position description and the performance standards for the position were thoroughly reviewed prior to submission of this recommendation; that the employee's performance is outstanding; and that the performance is characteristic and is expected to continue in the future.					
* Attach a copy of employee's latest performance rating of record. Also, attach a justification statement, if required.					
17. DATE OF LAST PROMOTION		18. DATE OF LAST WITHIN GRADE INCREASE		19. AMOUNT RECOMMENDED FOR PERFORMANCE BONUS AWARD	
				\$	
RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL					
20. RECOMMENDING INDIVIDUAL (Signature)		DATE		21. REVIEWING OFFICIAL (Signature)	
TITLE:		TITLE:		DATE	
22. APPROVING OFFICIAL (Signature & Title)				DATE	
PERSONNEL USE ONLY					
23. AGENCY CODE / POI	24. DATE EFFECTIVE	QUALITY STEP INCREASE:	25. TO: (Grade & Step)	26. NEW SALARY	27. RATE
28. PAY RATE DETERMINANT CODE					
I certify that the proposed action is in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements			29. PERSONNEL OFFICIAL (Signature & Title)		DATE PROCESSED

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Form AD-287-2 (7/94)

Note that this form is available electronically as a Word document on NASSNet, under Awards.

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE NOMINATIONS and APPROVALS TEMPLATE

- 1.) Name of Person or Team: _____
- 2.) Type of Award (*check only ONE Award type below*):
- _____Administrator's Award _____Circle _____Cooperator _____NASDA
- 3.) Awards Category (*Note that this ONLY applies to the Administrator's Award nominations*):
- (*check only ONE Awards Category*)
- ☐ Program Support (Single Interval)
- ☐ Supervisor/Manager
- ☐ Non-Supervisory (Double Interval)

~~ *APPROVALS* ~~

I. Division/ DAFO FO Awards Committee Recommendation:

- ☐
- Recommended
- ☐
- Not Recommended

Committee Chair
Date

II. Incentive Awards Committee (IAC) Recommendation:

- ☐ **Recommended** ☐ **Not Recommended**

IAC Chair
Date

III. NASS Administrator's Approval:

- ☐ **Approved** ☐ **Not Approved**

NASS Administrator
Date

AWARDS for EXCELLENCE NOMINATIONS and APPROVALS TEMPLATE

AWARDS JUSTIFICATIONS GUIDANCE

The justification must be based upon work that resulted in specific accomplishments, contributions, or outcomes that contributed significantly to one or more of the seven Award Attributes, including:

- Advancement of USDA and/or NASS mission and goals;
- Improved quality of NASS Products and Services;
- Increased Efficiency/Effectiveness/Productivity/Cost Savings;
- Outstanding Customer Service;
- Public Relations/Promotion of NASS's image and recognition;
- Demonstration of NASS Core Values: Trust, Respect, Unbiasedness, Service, and Teamwork;
- Completion of special assignments under extraordinary or very unusual circumstances.

Specifically, the document must address the actions and the significant results, benefits, or outcomes of those actions, and how creativity and innovation fostered those successes. The awards justification must clearly answer the "so what?" question and show, using specific examples, how the work exceeded the normal job duties and yielded results which reaped benefits to the Agency, beyond the single Field Office or HQ work unit.

(Note that each of the following five items must be included in all of the Awards justifications; Circle Awards justifications have two additional questions.)

- 1.) **Please write ONE sentence that best summarizes the reason for this award.**
- 2.) **General Information:** *Employee's title, Division/Branch/Section or Field Office, key responsibilities, length of service.*
- 3.) **Accomplishments:** *Specific actions, descriptions, behaviors; what was done, when, steps.*
- 4.) **Results/Impact:** *What happened because of this? What came out of it that is of value? Outcomes? What is the scope of the impact? Improved quality? Efficiencies? Cost savings? Enhanced respondent relations with our Nation's producers? Describe how creativity and innovation fostered these successes.*
- 5.) **Quote:** *Suggest a brief quote to summarize the importance of the individual's or team's service.*

The next two questions apply only to the Circle Awards nominations:

- 6.) **Teamwork Skills:** *Describe how the team demonstrated superior teamwork skills.*
- 7.) **Team Roles:** *For each team member, provide **one sentence** describing their particular role on the team and specifically how they contributed to the team's overall success.*

